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# U.S.-Soviet showdown on rights anticipated

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OTTAWA — The Soviet Union is trying to prevent an examination of its human rights abuses at an upcoming meeting of international human rights officials here.

But the head of the U.S. delegation to the conference said regardless of Soviet maneuvers he will press the Russians on their failure to abide by human rights promises they made in a 10-year-old accord signed by 35 nations.

Richard T. Schifter said the Soviets "cannot stop us from discussing" human rights abuses in Russia.

In a statement released in Moscow prior to yesterday's preliminary session of the conference, the head of the Soviet delegation said no country should criticize another's human rights record. Deputy head of the 11-member Soviet delegation is Sergei Kondrashev, reputed to be a general in the KGB, the Soviet secret police.

Mr. Schifter, reacting to the Soviet position, said, "We have not come here to be involved in confrontation for the sake of confrontation. At the same time, we're not here because we like the fresh air in Ottawa."

Mr. Schifter, in an interview with The Washington Times yesterday, added the United States will prod the Soviets to ease restrictions on political dissidents, religious freedom and immigration.

"We are going to illustrate our position with examples," he said, indicating that he would bring up Soviet dissidents by name in the sessions.

The upcoming meeting is the first session of Human Rights Experts of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the first meeting relating to the Helsinki accords held in North America.

A two-week-long preliminary meeting began yesterday to allow delegates from 35 countries to set an agenda for the conference, which is scheduled to begin May 7 and last for six weeks.

The conference is one of a series of such meetings that have been held to monitor international compliance with the 1975 Helsinki accords in which the West in effect legitimized the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe.

Helsinki also produced a document called the Final Act. It sets a framework to resolve humanitarian, economic, political and military issues that divide Europe. The Soviet Union has been accused of violating repeatedly several of these guarantees.

Several meetings since 1975 have broken down into confrontations between the Western allies and communist countries, and some observers have criticized the meetings as useless or the results as "ridiculous" by Western standards.

Referring to the last meeting, which lasted more than 2½ years in Madrid, critics said the United States is getting no concessions from the Soviets and that the meetings are simply make-work exercises for legions of bureaucrats and diplomats.

Critics of the process, for instance, have criticized the United States and the West for backing down in the Madrid sessions on Soviet jamming of such broadcasts as those of Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America.

Mr. Schifter yesterday said the meetings are not a waste of time but an opportunity for multinational discussions.

"I realize that a good many people view the conference as an institution," he said. "But we cannot ignore the fact that this is one piece of a mosaic."

He said the upcoming conference is an opportunity to hold the Soviet Union accountable for breaking its promises.